



**Address**  
**by**  
**the President of Iceland**  
**Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson**  
**at the opening of the Nordic stamp exhibition**  
**Nordia 03**  
**16<sup>th</sup> October 2003**

Ágætu frímerkjasafnarar  
Distinguished collectors, philatelists  
Friends from the Nordic countries  
Ladies and gentlemen

We welcome the great Nordic stamp exhibition to Iceland once again and salute all those who have journeyed from afar, from Scandinavia and other countries, to participate in this magnificent event.

Stamp collecting is both deeply rooted in national cultures, in our history and heritage, and also profoundly international in character, a symbol of how people have interacted and linked different places.

It is splendid to witness how different series of stamps allow us to celebrate important epochs, events, achievements, outstanding personalities, poets, painters, scholars, scientists, historical leaders, heroes; all those who have deeply influenced our lives, moulded our societies, shaped our identity, created the fabric which makes us modern but has at the same time influenced us through tradition and culture.

A nation reveals itself through the stamps it issues; the character of the people interpreted through the choices of what is celebrated by special series.

Thus exhibitions such as the one we open today are national landmarks, signposts in our journey towards the future.

We are also able to witness how we are increasingly becoming aware of nature through the enhanced importance of stamps devoted to the beauty of creation, to flowers and birds, to species of fish and other

marine resources, to mountains, volcanoes and geysers, to the ever-changing symphony of colour and light which different places conjure forth.

In the old days it was sufficient to portray a king, because the monarch was considered to be the centre of the human universe, but now we have opened up the world of stamps to all the glories of the creation.

It is therefore truly wonderful to see in great stamp exhibitions how they reflect ourselves, how they are magnificent mirrors which enable us to interpret who we are.

The Nordic spirit has always been a profound characteristic of these exhibitions and here today we are given many opportunities to journey through Nordic history, sense the emergence of modernisation and also how we have changed in significant ways.

The distinguished philatelists who honour us here today with examples of their outstanding contributions remind us how collecting stamps deepens our knowledge, enhances our sense of history and human fate, and we are deeply grateful to these enthusiasts who are presenting their personal exhibits here.

It also reminds those of us who started to collect stamps at a young age how our lives became richer through such early endeavours.

In a small fishing village in the West Fjords I joined my grandfather on long winter evenings to go through his small collection and I can still see the pride in his face, the glory in his eyes when he showed me the series issued to commemorate the thousandth anniversary of our parliament, the establishment of the Republic and the discovery of America by the Icelandic Vikings. And how proud I was when he gave me his collection when I left the village to live in Reykjavík.

Stamps have been a part of our upbringing, of our memories, of our family life, and although times have changed, stamps will always have a secure future through devoted collectors.

I congratulate all of you who have worked so diligently to bring this exhibition together and it gives me great pleasure to declare the Nordic stamp exhibition Nordia 03 hereby open.